

10 August 2026

2026 South Australian Training Awards finalists announced

Some of the most outstanding individuals and organisations in the state's vocational education and training sector have been announced as finalists in the 2026 South Australian Training Awards.

Presented by the South Australian Skills Commission, the Awards mark 30 years of celebrating excellence and as South Australia's most prestigious awards program for vocational education and training (VET).

The Awards shine a spotlight on the achievements of apprentices, trainees, students, teachers, training providers, schools, and employers. This milestone year attracted a record number of high-quality nominations across 14 award categories.

Winners will be announced at the Gala Presentation on Friday 11 September 2026 at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Winners in eligible categories will go on to represent South Australia at the 2026 Australian Training Awards, to be held in Sydney on Friday 20 November 2026.

The Awards program showcases VET as a pathway of choice and highlights its critical role in developing the skilled workforce South Australia needs now and into the future, including in industries such as defence and construction.

Collectively, the finalists demonstrate the strength, breadth and impact of vocational education and training across South Australia.

Voting is now open for the Voters' Choice Award, giving the public the opportunity to support their favourite individual finalist. Voting will remain open until 8.00 pm on Friday 11 September 2026, with the winner announced during the Gala Presentation.

Quotes attributable to Hon Lucy Hood MP, Minister for Education, Training and Skills

More South Australians are participating in and completing apprenticeships and traineeships aligned with our state's priority areas.

We have ambitious infrastructure goals and are providing opportunities to ensure our growing workforce has the skills needed to meet industry demand.

For three decades, the South Australian Training Awards have recognised the achievements of apprentices, trainees, students, training organisations and employers – and I congratulate all this year’s finalists who are driving our VET sector forward.

Quotes attributable to Commissioner Cameron Baker, Chair of the South Australian Skills Commission

As we reach this milestone, we celebrate 30 years of the South Australian Training Awards shining a light on the unsung heroes of our VET sector.

Whether they are excelling in their individual training journeys or leading organisations and collaborations that create rewarding, high-value career pathways, being named a finalist is significant recognition of their achievements.

Congratulations to all the finalists, whose achievements showcase the commitment, quality and innovation within South Australia’s training sector.

2026 South Australian Training Awards Finalists

Individual Awards

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year	Employed by
Elkira Simmons	Maxima Training Group (Aust) Ltd
Lucas Pittaway	Alliance Airlines Pty Ltd
Lucinda Bilney	GOGO Foundation

Apprentice of the Year	Employed by
Aya Pulle	Civil Apprenticeships and Careers Ltd
Dana Koch	Reds Country Designs
James Van Der Stelt	Programmed Skilled Workforce Ltd
Rebecca Hlinak	BAE Systems Maritime Australia

School-based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year	Employed by
Austin Trzesinski-Smith	Outside Ideas CLC Pty Ltd
Celina Jackson	Revive Hair
Evie Willis	Keith Community Child Care Centre Inc
Keeley O’Shaughnessy	BAE Systems Maritime Australia

Trainee of the Year	Employed by
Annabel Levett	Mas National
Connor Mulholland	MEGT (Australia) Ltd
Polly Marks	Fulton Hogan Australia (Management) Pty Ltd
Sean De Robillard	PEER Education Employment & Training Ltd

Vocational Student of the Year	Training Provider
Emily Stone	Plenty Training
Mia Brown	Regional Skills Training
Rose Kemp	TAFE SA
Shylie Mason	EQUALS International
Zabibu Jamali Irakoze	Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year	Employed by
Geoffrey Turner	Competency Training
Maisa Lacasandile	CHM Alliance
Tony O'Rielly	Ironwood Institute
Vicki Cooper	ELC Training Australia

Lifetime Achievement Award
Winner announced at the Gala Presentation.

Organisational Awards

Adult Community Education Provider of the Year
Community Access and Services SA
CommunityLIFE SA
GOGO Foundation
Morella Community Centre
SkillUp SA

Industry Collaboration
Defence Industry Pathways Program SA
Heavy Industry Multi Skills Program
Timber and Wood Product Operations Traineeship

Large Employer of the Year
BAE Systems Australia
BHP
Datacom
Mayfield Industries in collaboration with Australian Industry Group Apprentice and Trainee Centre

Large Training Provider of the Year
Adelaide Training and Employment Centre
Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)
Civil Train SA
MTA Training and Employment
TAFE SA

Small Employer of the Year
Longko Salon
Sortini Carpentry & Maintenance

Small Training Provider of the Year
ELC Training Australia
Ironwood Institute
MTC Training

VET Innovation for Schools
Golden Grove High School
Seaford Secondary College
Western Technical College

For information about the finalists please see <https://skillscommission.sa.gov.au/2026-sata-finalists>